


<b>The Albanian National Political Party” in the USA (1917-1920) – The First Albanian Political Party Created in Diaspora After the Proclamation of Independence and the Creation of the Independent Albanian State</b>			<b>History</b>
			<b>Keywords:</b> Diaspora, Albanian case, political organization, support, international factor.
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<b>Abstract</b>			
<p>This study aims to analyze analytically an important aspect of the Albanian political life; the political and organizational pluralism, outside the Albanian borders. Historic resources indicate the existence of political parties in the Albanian territories, outside today’s boundaries and in Diaspora, in the early 20th century. In order to shed light on the truth related to what was mentioned above, the object of this paper is treating the creation of a party in the Albanian Diaspora in the USA, The Albanian National Political party.</p> <p>It was founded on 27th of August 1917 at Worcester Mass and directed by Sevasti and Kristo Dako. It was the first Albanian political party created in Diaspora after the Albania’s Declaration of Independence and the creation of an independent Albanian state. This party aimed to defend the Albanian territorial integrity and the Albanian State from the risk that was threatening Albania, in the Conference of Ambassadors in London.</p> <p>Its activity consisted in protesting over the injustices made to Albania in this conference, and also sending a delegate in Washington D.C. This Party aimed to reach a better recognition of Albania’s matters among the diplomatic circles, and win the support of the USA in protecting Albania.</p>			

## I. The foundation of the Albanian National Party in the USA (1917)

It was founded on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1917 in Worcester (USA) by some Albanian economic immigrants living and working in the USA. It continued to operate until the first half of 1920. The chair leaders of the “National Political Party” have been: at the beginning Sevasti Qiriazhi<sup>37</sup> (Dako) and then Kristo Dako. In the political concept of Albanian’s Diaspora, apart from that situated in America, it was created the belief on the necessity of a pluralistic life in the organizational and notional level, as a condition and an essential factor for the development of a country and of a society. “Every government, society in order to develop, need a party” it was written by Kristo Dako in Library magazine “Voice of Albania” dating 15.06.1916, that was published in Southbridge, Massachusetts of the USA, - the parties need organization, they need a leader, who can take the initiative and move it forward. (Magazine Library “Voice of Albania” Southbridge, Massachusetts, 1916, June 15<sup>th</sup>) It was the first Albanian political party created in Diaspora after the Albania’s Declaration of Independence and the creation of the independent Albanian state.

<sup>37</sup> The creation of “The first political party” in emigration from two females, Qirjazi Sisters, with center in Worcester in USA, dates in the year 1917. The chair leader of this party was chosen Sevasti Qiriazhi by marking so the first Albanian woman in leading a political party with a dense national and political activity. (Taken from the Encyclopedia’s Dictionary of the Albanian Woman, (Dibra, 2009: 484) The Canon law of the “National Political Party”

The “National Political Party” was created at a time when the world was under the flames of the First World War; Albania was occupied and turned into a battlefield between the forces of the two military blocs. In these difficult circumstances and serious political moments, when new dangers were directly threatening Albania and the Albanian people, the Albanians who had gone to the USA as economic immigrants, who lived and worked there, felt and understood the historical and political need that was dictated to Albania and the Albanians by the circumstances during the First World War. So, in order to better serve with devotion the interests of their Motherland, they were organized and created the Albanian “National Political Party” in the US and their activity leitmotiv was “Rescuing and ensuring the integrity of Albania”.

Immediately after it was created, it focused with a great devotion all its activities in finding ways, possibilities and means of supporting and assisting the liberation of the motherland from the invasion, saving the Albania of 1913 – from further cleavages, recreating an independent Albanian state and at the same time boldly demanding the correction of the historical injustices that had been made on the Ethnic lands and the ethnic Albanian population by the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1912-1913.

Its regulation program (“Albania” newspaper, 1918, February 28) embodied these national demands that the time had propounded as historical tasks in front of every citizen. By proclaiming their own political objectives with a clear national character and purpose that responded to the historical and political needs of Albania, of the Albanians, and of the “Albanian Case” at that time, it preceded, embodied and expressed also the requests of the Albanian National Movement that was developing inside the country (as far as the circumstances could allow it), in the occupied Albania, divided into military zones of the occupying forces.

“The National Political Party” was almost the only political force, organized with a political platform that announced national political objectives and goals which were not only published but which were accompanied with wide, systematic and dense activities for the awareness of the international factor and for the acceleration of the Albanian National Movement. It must be admitted, because it is a fact, that the history of the creation and the intensive activity of “National Political Party” is not very well known.

In fact, it has the greatest historical and political merit, because the period when it was created and functioned, was one of the most difficult ones in the history of the Albanian nation; and it was created precisely to contribute with its activity to the interests of the Albanian nation and its national issue in those difficult circumstances.

## **II. An overview of the political, patriotic and national activity of the National “Political Party”**

We will not describe in details its political, national activity, that it elaborated since the moment of its creation in 1920, when the National Congress of Lushnja was held and the independent Albanian state was recovering, because it is very wide and multi lateral, and will fall out of the object of our paper, which regards the political parties that were created during the

period 1914 – 1924 as a proof of the continuation of the development of political pluralism in Albania and Diaspora.

The life and activity history of the "Albanian National Political Party" in the USA is very wide and we like, hope and believe that one day it will be the object of a monographic paper, as it deserves. However, due to the weight, role, work and special contributions that it gave in the interest of Albania and the Albanian nation, we will here point out some important moments of its activity. It was a party with national character that with its overall political activity gave an outstanding contribution to the Albanian national matter, raising the awareness of the political and diplomatic circles in the USA, Europe and in the international progressive opinion.

### **III. The creation of branches of the “National Political Party” in the US cities, where there were Albanian immigrants and their political activity**

Unlike all political parties that were established and operated in Albania after the Congress of Lushnja and the recovery of the Independent State 1920 until December 1924, which failed to create organizational structures (own branches) in any other cities (besides “Radical - Democrat Party”), the “Albanian National Political Party” in the USA since its creation in 1917 and throughout its existence was very well organized. It created effective organizational structure and active branches, acting and functioning in many US cities, where there were Albanian immigrants. They operated regularly on the basis of principles clearly defined in the Regulations of the Party and on the occasional instructions given by the Leading commission of the Party, which was regularly informed about every their own initiative and activity.

By exploiting patriotism, willpower, persistence and the commitment to readiness that existed among the Albanian immigrants to help by any means their own motherland from suffering the atrocities of the First World War, the Party quickly enlarged the number of members and its branches. This gave it the opportunity to extend and expand its activity continuously in many cities. The process of membership increase, the extension and expansion of its activities was significantly influenced also by the US politics towards the small countries, and particularly the 14-point program of President W. Wilson for the new world order, about the application of the principle of self-determination of nations. “According to this principle, wherever it might possible,” especially in Central and Eastern Europe, “people belonging to the same nation, united by their language, culture and common history, should govern themselves.” (Sala, Filo, Gashi, 2009) These principles gave a powerful support and incitement to the activity of the “Political Party” and its own branches to respond to the duties that were propounded by the historical needs of Albania and the Albanians. All party functioned with a full discipline rule which was based on norms and principles defined in two of its basic documents: In the Canon (“Albania” newspaper, 1918, August 15) law of the “Political Party”<sup>38</sup> In the Regulation of the “Political Party”

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<sup>38</sup> The Canon law of the “National Political Party” 1 – The national Albanians living in the United States: a) thinking of the risk in which Albania is found and especially the areas that were unjustly detached from its body and given to Montenegro, Serbia and Greece in the Conference of London b) being based on the high principles of the American

#### IV. “Albania” newspaper, official organ of the “National Political Party”

In contrast to all political parties established during the period of 1914 – 1924 in Albania or abroad, the “National Political Party” was the only Albanian political party, which during the years of its existence, created and published its official edition regularly, “Albania” newspaper, which was first published on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1918. “Albania” was an illustrated, political, social, and academic newspaper, official organ of the “National Political Party.” The newspaper was published every two weeks the first year, every week the second year, and every month and a half the third year. It was written in Albanian, partly in English and French. All in all it managed to publish a total of 106 publications. (Albanian Academy of Science, Encyclopedic Albanian Dictionary, 2008) “The newspaper strictly included the dissemination of the basic purposes and the political objectives of the “National Political Party”. It “propagated the idea of a political consolidation of all the Albanians, it held an opened attitude against the disintegration of the Albanian territories, it denounced the secret Treaty of London in 1915 and it popularized the outstanding figures of the Renaissance and the Independence of Albania”. (Ibid)

The Members and the branches of the Party held a number of conferences in various US cities and published different articles of national content at their newspaper’s pages. The “National Political Party” wrote several memorandums and protest notes to the Great Powers. It helped in the expansion of the movement of the Albanian people against the partition policies of these powers towards Albania after World War I and propagated systematically the Albanian issue in the international arena, so it utilized every event for such a purpose.

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people that nourished the rights of the small nationalities which were generously and kindly declared by President Wilson in the Senate on January 22<sup>nd</sup> stating among others that: The “ruling of the people needs to be built on their will and permission, so none of the governments has the right to deliver to another government a nation without its will and permission, because the nations are not goods of a government.” Organized a party named: “The National Political party of the Albanians for the salvation and the insurance of Albania’s integrity”. 2 -The center of the party was in Worcester Massachusetts. 3- This party will attempt with any lawful manner to save from the greediness of the neighbors, not only the territories inside the borders divided by the Conference of London, but also the territories that were unjust fully detached by the Albania’s body and were given to Montenegro, Serbia and Greece. 4 -The Party in order to reach its purpose of salvation: a) Will attempts to join the entire national Albanians around this party. b) Will send delegates in Europe: the notorious diplomat Ismail Bey Vlora and many other ones. c) Will send a delegate in Washington DC. It will attempt to make to make the Albanian case known among diplomatic circles the, it will attempt to increase Albania’s friends, attempt to win the sympathy and support of the American government in order to protect Albania’s integrity in the Peace Conference. d) Will publish an organ which can spread the holy intention of the party by protecting the integrity of Albania. d) It will make every lawful movement that time will show as necessary and useful for its holy purpose. 5 – Every Albanian can be made a member of this party. 6-Each member will pay \$ 2.00 for registration and 0.50 C in every month. 7 - The party will be governed and chaired by a committee of 7 persons which will meet once a month, and if it is needed even more often. The Commission will be elected by the Assembly for a year; the Assembly will meet on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May each year. 8 – The income of the Party consists of: a-member’s fee, b-gifts, c-profits that may remain in the branches that will be organized by the Party. 9 - In every state of the United States where there are 10 or more Albanians that wish to become members of this party could be started a new branch. 10 – The governance of those branches will be made according to the Canon law and regulations of the Center, with be done by means of an elder group which will consist of 5 people. 11 – The expenses of the branches will be covered by their own incomes and the remaining amount will be will remain transferred in the center’s cashbox every three months. 12 – If any of the branches will be disintegrated, its entire wealth will be transferred in the Party’s center.

The “Albania” newspaper since its first number at the right side of the title declared publicly that: “Albania”, the official organ of the “National Political Party”, stands for the sacred purpose of the Salvation of Albania, while on the left side of the title (below it) wrote: Leading until the end for Albania.

The newspaper became a powerful tool for the popularization of the activity of special branches and of the whole Party. Through the newspaper the party developed a wide political and propagandistic activity not only between its own members, but also nourishing and activating the National Movement in the occupied Albanian territories.

It also reflected the developments at the Peace Conference in Paris (“Albania” Newspaper. New York. 1918. December 5) in which, the “National Political Party”, in order to protect the Albanian national issue it sent its own representatives.

Judging from those facts and other types of facts of this kind, the “National Political Party” was the only political party that sent its representatives, not only at the Peace Conference in Paris, but also at the highest political and diplomatic circles of the United States in Washington.

On the other hand the Party had very good relations with special European and American personalities as: “Charles Richard (Charles Richard Crane) a diplomat, researcher and an American humanitarian who was a close supporter of the Albanian patriots and the Albanian National Movement”, (Ibid) “Herbert Obrej, a British political personality, a very popular person and defender of the Albanian issue in the international arena, who tried to support the Albanians in their difficult moments of national matter...” (Ibid)

The Political Party at that time managed to use them in favor of the Albanian national problem, trusting them its representation in international forums which were held in those historical and political circumstances during the period of 1917 – 1920.

## **V. The participation of the representatives of the "National Political Party" at the International Assembly of the Enslaved Nationalities (23 – 26 October 1918)**

In October 1918, the “National Political Party” sent Kristo Dako and Nuredin bey Vlora as their representatives at the International Assembly of the Enslaved Nationalities, held at the Independence Hall, Philadelphia from 23<sup>rd</sup> till 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1918. The Assembly was invoked with the initiative of “The Democratic Mid European Union” organization, which at that time was leading the movement for freedom of all the Enslaved Nations. The assembly was held in the sanctuary, at the Independence Hall where the document for the independence and freedom of the United States of America was signed by George Washington. The Albanian delegates in their deliberations propounded some of the Albanian’s demands in front of the Assembly and rejected the claims of the Albanian nation’s enemies. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1918, at the holy place, the Independence Hall, with a great ceremony, it was signed by the twelve representatives of the enslaved nationalities The Statement of the Common Goals of the Free Mid Europe States, a copy of which was sent to the President of US Wudrov Wilson, a copy was left at the Independence Hall and a copy was handed to the representatives who had the honor to sign it.(Christo Dako.

1918) On behalf of the Kosovo Albanians and the Çam population<sup>39</sup>, this declaration was signed by Kristo Dako. This is one of the most important activities of the “Political Party” for raising the awareness of the American and world wide political and diplomatic circles about the historical injustices that were done at the expense of Ethnic territories and the Albanian Nation, which left part of those ethnic territories and lots of Albanian people under the captivity of the Greek and Serb chauvinist circles.

## VI. The first Assembly of the “NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTY” 12 -15 May 1918

The first Assembly of the “Political Party” was held from the 12<sup>th</sup> until the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1918 in Worcester Mass, where the 10 branches established until then were represented. **Branch number 1 Worcester Mass** was represented in the assembly by Mehmet Hado and Haxhi Gjebrea; **Branch number 2 Southbridge Mass** was represented by Kopi V. Tushmeshit; **Branch number 3** of Waterbury Conn was represented by Hasan Dule and Musa Isa; **Branch number 4 New York** was represented by Athanas Baltadori; **Branch number 5 of Butte Mont** was represented by Zisi Kalo; **Branch number 6 Johstown Pa** was represented by Qazim Çorushi; **Branch number 7 New Bedford Mass** was represented by Izet M. Gjirokastra; **Branch number 8 Fitchburg Masse** was represented by Musa Bilali; **Branch number 9 New Florence Pa** was represented by Qazim Çorushi and Branch number 10 of the Philadelphia Pa was represented by Mid `hat Margëlliçit.

The first Assembly reviewed all the Party activities since its establishment; it defined the main directions of any further activity and it elected the governing bodies. As the chair leader of the “Political Party” it was reelected Sevasti Dako<sup>40</sup> and as a secretary Dhimitër Balla. The leading Commission of the Party which was elected by the first Assembly consisted of Sevasti Dako (President), Dhimitër Balla (Secretary), Mesud Çami, Haxhi Murati, Mehmet Demi, Bajram Konispoli, Malo Çeço dhe Malko Meçe.

The Assembly appointed Nuredin Bey Vlora as a delegate of the “Political Party” in Washington. The “Political Party” directed a plea to the US President Wudrov Wilson and to the ambassadors of Great Britain, France and Italy in Washington, who were asked to take appropriate measures to stop the Greek terror on the Albanian population in Çamëria.

<sup>39</sup> Çamëria was an Albanian territory before 1912, which was left outside Albania and was given to Greece after the London Conference of Ambassadors in 1913. Çamët were the community of this region who were expelled from their territories, due to the politics of the Greek state.

<sup>40</sup> Sevasti Dako keeps the opening speech and welcomes the delegates, representatives and members as well as all the Albanians that honored the party with their participation. In her speech among others she stressed that: “First of all I call it as a duty to give a welcome thank you to the noble American people as well as their noted president Mr. Wilson for the freedom he gives us in order to gather and take consults about the needs of our Motherland, work freely in order to defend our national rights. We mostly need to thank the noble American people as well as their noted President Wilson, for the sympathy that they nourished for the small nations and for the decision and the unshakable attitude it has taken in order to defend the rights of the small nations as the president has so gently declared in front of the Congress. (A chronicle about the development of a great meeting organized in the city of Worcester Mass on May 12<sup>th</sup> 1918)

After the First Party Assembly the process of the members increase and the creation of new branches in other cities and throughout them the expansion of its activities got a very rapid development.

Branches were established in Canton Ohio - 30 members, ( "Albania Newspaper" 1918. September 12) in Massillon Ohio - 51 members( "Albania Newspaper" 1918. September 19), in Braddock Pa etc. The "Albania" newspaper, an organ of the Party, which was first published in New York, starting from 15<sup>th</sup> August 1918 (No. 18) was published in Worcester Mass where was the Party center.

In September 1918 by the "Political Party" it was launched the idea of creating a volunteer regiment of Albanian immigrants in the US, who would go to Albania to fight alongside their brothers, for the liberation of the country and defending its territorial integrity.

The "National Political Party" did a lot in this regard. It was among the first organizations and political parties which together with its own branches dealt with a lot of responsibility and arguments the issue for the need and the necessity of solving the Albanian national problem. Its branches and all its members wherever they acted in the US organized meetings, conferences, gathering contributions, publishing articles, formulating memorandums and protests which they sent to the Great Powers, in which they expressed not only their support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Albanian State, but also the liberation of the Albanian territories unjustly left outside the Albanian borders in 1913, and their union with the motherland as well as the creation of the Albanian National Independent State in its natural ethnic borders of our Nation.

## **VII. The "National Political Party" sent its representatives at the Peace Conference in Paris 1919 – 1920**

After the end of First World War, as soon as the Peace Conference in Paris started on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1919, the "National Political Party" appointed its delegate (representatives – RM., L.L.) at that international forum, which was expected to examine the Albanian case. At the beginning it appointed Ismail Qemal Vlora (Qemali I. 1918) as its representative. After the death of Ismail Qemal Vlora (January 1919), it sent Parashqevi Qiriazi, Mihal Grameno and Nuredin Vlora at the Peace Conference. On behalf of "National Political Party" Nikolla Ivanaj also went to Paris.

They were united together with the representatives of other Albanian colonies such as: Turkey, Romania and the Federation "Vatra" in the US, and they created a common front, opposing the yielding attitude of the Provisional Government delegation of Durres towards Italy.

While the Second Assembly of the "Political Party" ("Albania" Newspaper. 1919. March, 20) which was held from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1919, among others, it also assigned Hasan Prishtina, Aqif pasha Elbasani, Nikolla Ivanajn, Pandeli Calen, Halil Pashë Gjirokastra, Fuat bey Diber, Ahmet bej Matin, Mihal Shahinin, Louis Bonatin, Midatin, Kasnecin, Pecin, Faikun, Ali bej Këlcyrën, Ismail Bey Vrionin, Eqerem bey Vlorën, Hetem Qemalin, Pandeli Evangjelin, Nexhip

Dragën and Parashqevi Qiriazin and the well the known Albanian supporters Charles Crane and Aubrey Herbert<sup>41</sup>, who were elected honorary delegates.

In this newspaper there was written: “Albanian brothers! The Assembly of the Political Party held in Worcester, Mass in 1919, March 7, taking into consideration the critical period of time and the crisis which our Homeland is encountering, elected delegates to be sent in Paris in order to act in the Conference of Peace according to the program of the Party. It also decided that the Party fights against all neighbors who have shown their intentions for our dear Albania... The war that the Party is going to do during all these periods of time will be a decisive one, it will either draw us winners or losers. The Party besides the rescue of Kosovo and Çamëria, also requires the independence of entire Albania.” Therefore this was the purpose of the Assembly that selected the delegates for the Conference of Peace in Paris. (“Albani” Newspaper. 1919. March 20)

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<sup>41</sup> Herbert Obrej (1880-1923). An English political personality, really popular and defender of the Albanian case in the international Arena. From 1904 till 1917 he traveled into the Albanian territories from the North to south, and became acquainted with the people.